

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Green Philippine passports no longer valid by 2010

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last April 8. The Philippine Consular Office in Los Angeles has jurisdiction over Southern Nevada, Southern California, Texas and Arizona. The Consulate normally requires Filipino citizens living in these areas to do consular transactions in person. MRP applicants, in particular, need to apply in person at the California office.

The new maroon-colored MRP has a "machine readable zone" containing the personal data of the passport holder that can be read by a machine or computer. At the same time, personal details of an individual are also visible to the naked eye.

The ICAO is an agency of the United Nations that fosters the planning and development of air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth.

It has required all its member states, including the Philippines, to issue MRPs before April 1, 2010 to replace existing passports of its citizens. MRPs are expected to make processing of travelers at ports of entry faster since the information in the passport can be read by the machine and stored

automatically in the database of immigration offices.

This is expected to make processing of travelers at ports of entry and exit faster.

"This means greater convenience and security for the traveler. In the past, the information is manually encoded in the database," the Los Angeles Philippine Consulate said in its website.

The Consul General in a statement said that Filipinos who want to apply for a MRP during the consular outreach in Las Vegas need to make an appointment on or before May 20.

"While walk in applicants will also be entertained, priority will be given to those with confirmed appointments," it added.

Appointments can be made via email at laphilcongen@gmail.com or fax 213-639-0990, while application forms can be downloaded from www.philippineconsulatela.org.

Confirmed appointments will be posted at this website as well.

MRP applicants also need to mail or fax advanced copies of application forms as well as a copy of the data page of their current passports. In addition, they need

to submit three passport-sized photos with royal blue background, instead of white during the consular outreach. All applicants with confirmed appointments are required to complete the application in person.

MRP application fee is \$50 while mailing costs an additional \$6. It will take approximately six weeks to receive the new document

Meanwhile, the consular team will also offer other services during the two-day outreach which will be held from 9am to 5pm at the Colonade Square Plaza on 8826 S. Eastern Ave., Suite 115 Las Vegas, NV.

Other consular transactions include processing of applications for retention and re-acquisition of Philippine citizenship; notarization of documents; and registration for overseas absentee voting.

Filipinos who want to avail of these additional services during the Consular outreach should also send advanced copies of application forms to the Los Angeles Consular office via fax or e-mail. They need to as set up appointments before May 20 via fax or e-mail as well. (*Dymphna Calica-La Putt*)

US Marine in Subic rape case acquitted

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During the marathon trial in 2006, Nicole claimed that Smith raped her at the back of a van in the evening of November 1, 2005, while three other US servicemen, cheered him on.

Nicole recanted the allegations in an affidavit dated March 8, saying she was too drunk to recall what happened. The court said the recantation was not considered in its decision to acquit Smith.

"Suddenly the moment of parting came and the marines had to rush to the ship. In that situation, reality dawned on Nicole—what her audacity and reckless abandon, flirting with Smith and leading him on, brought upon her," the court said.

"That must have been shattering, but added to this was the mocking moments she heard from inside the van; 'leave that b****!' or words to that effect—which really broke her as she shouted back in denial: I am not a b****," it said.

The court said: "No evidence was introduced to show force, threat and intimidation applied by the accused upon Nicole even as prosecution vainly tried to highlight her supposed intoxication and alleged unconsciousness at the time of the sexual act."

The appellate court division was comprised of

three women associate justices: Remedios Fernando, chairman of the Special Eleventh Division; Myrna Dimaranan-Vidal and Arevalo-Zenarosa who penned the decision.

Smith is detained at the US embassy in Manila. His acquittal, two years after his conviction at the Makati regional trial court, removes an irritant in the implementation of the Philippine-US Visiting Forces Agreement, months after US President Barack Obama called up President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to emphasize the importance of the VFA in the two countries' relations.

The VFA came under fire for its alleged lopsided provisions when the Philippine government surrendered custody of Smith to the US embassy even after his conviction, based on a provision in the VFA, which stated that the US embassy would retain custody of American servicemen pending all legal proceedings on any offenses they might have committed.

The Makati regional trial court had sentenced Smith to reclusion perpetua or life imprisonment.

The court had acquitted three of Smith's co-accused—Staff Sergeant Chad Carpenter and Lance Corporals Keith Silkwood and Dominique Duplantis. ■

Pacquiao throws ceremonial pitch at SF Giants Game

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took time to visit his thousands of fans in the Bay Area during Filipino Heritage Night, an event sponsored by the SF Giants at AT&T Park.

Prior to throwing the ceremonial pitch to Fil-Am pitcher Tim Lincecum, Pacquiao held a press conference in the Giants' Interview Room where boxing promoter Bob Arum and coach Freddie Roach joined Pacquiao to answer questions from media.

Being one of the most successful and influential people not only in the ring, but also in the world, the press asked Pacquiao if he feels any pressure living up to people's expectations.

"That's what I'm trying to do in every fight, I'm doing my best to make people happy," he said.

With this, Arum informed the members of the press that Pacquiao is one of the nominees of *TIME Magazine's* 100 Most Influential People in the World. "Now you can vote, you can go online and vote," he said but added, "I'm really disappointed in the Filipinos. Two weeks ago, Manny was tied with Barack Obama. And now he's nine places back." So he is encouraging the Filipinos to go online and vote to push Pacquiao on top of the list.

Still, popularity is the last thing on Pacquiao's mind as his motivation is thinking about the people he truly cares about. "I think what gives me inspiration is my family, and the Filipino people for their support," he said and added, "I would like to think that I am the most popular boxer in the world, but what I'm trying to do is give good work and train hard for the fight and give the fans what they want."

Roach, who has been Pacquiao's trainer for the last few years, is confident about his

ward's chances. He was also coy on what their strategy is for the May 2 fight.

"Hatton's a rough guy. We're working on dealing with that. Manny will show our game plan on May 2. Manny is sparring with fighters who have the same style as Hatton's. So far, of the seven sparring partners he's had, Manny has knocked down four of them," Roach said.

"Manny is an easy guy to train. I even have to slow him down. Like today, for instance, I said 'Let's do one more round, get out of here and have an easy day.' But Manny kept saying, 'one more round, one more round.' He's one of the most dedicated fighters I have worked with, and one of the hardest workers in this sport," Roach added.

Arum, for his part, said that the focus right now is on this fight and not on who's next.

"This will be a difficult fight," Arum stated. "I hope that Manny wins this bout. Whoever wins will have a lot of time to decide the next fight."

"I don't know what will happen on May 2," Pacquiao said, "but I am prepared."

Pacquiao's other appearance around the ballpark was at Seals Plaza near the San Francisco Bay where he greeted the thousands of Filipinos enjoying the festival atmosphere.

Prior to Pacquiao's ceremonial pitch, the pre-game home-plate ceremony included Hydra Mendoza and other community leaders honoring several Filipino American World War II veterans, the handing of a check donation to a few Filipino nonprofit organizations by the SF Giants organization, and a number by the Likha Pilipino Folk Ensemble.

This is the third Filipino Heri-

tage Night conducted by the SF Giants organization. According to Al Perez, Filipino American Arts Exposition president, about 11,000 Filipino Americans bought tickets to this heritage event, exceeding the combined Filipino Heritage Night events total of 6,500 in 2008.

"This is the largest ever event of the San Francisco Giants that is a heritage night," Perez said. "I think they are going to use this as their template for their heritage nights due to the success. The Giants organization is very, very happy, and they are so easy to work with. In fact, during a post-event survey that the Giants conducted last year, it indicated that 30% of the people who bought tickets to Filipino Heritage Night were first-time attendees to a Giants baseball game. They are pleased that we are bringing new patrons to the game."

What also makes Perez and other members of the Fil-Am community happy is the fact that Filipino culture is exposed to a wider audience.

"Through events like this, Bay Area baseball fans get to experience and appreciate Filipino culture, and Filipinos who may not have had motivation to go to a baseball game are introduced to one of the greatest American traditions. I am glad that Filipino Heritage Night is a bridge that connects the Fil-Am community to the sports community," Perez explained.

"Filipino Heritage Night gives us a chance to be proudly both Filipino and American," Perez added.

Perez also hinted at another Filipino Heritage Night event scheduled for later in the baseball season. (*Joseph L. Peralta & Malou Liwanag-Aguilar*)

Opportunities abound despite...

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the Asian American community, and we wanted to make sure that they get the resources, that they have the ability to network and that they get information that is honest and accurate," Joyce Moy, AAARI's executive director told the *Asian Journal*.

A variety of topics were discussed, including opportunities and strategies needed in order to survive this difficult economy.

"If you want to borrow money so that you can jumpstart your small business, now is the right time. Don't look at the economic downturn as a downturn, look at it as market change," said Pearl Chin, executive director of Chinatown Manpower Project during a panel discussion on starting one's own business.

The sessions covered many questions, including the ABCs of starting your own business and whether one should start a new business in this economic climate.

"Do your research. Ask questions. Ask people for help in making your own business plan. Ask yourself if you are entrepreneurial material," said Brian Yeung, business advisor of York College—Small Business Development Center as he rattled off the

basics in coming up with a small business.

As an organization, York-SBDC has been helping small business through all phases of growth for almost two decades now, including helping clients access millions of dollars for their businesses.

Before setting off into the entrepreneur world, one needs to know the roadblocks and problems that can be found along the way. York-SBDC helps their clients in improving the viability of their small business through one-on-one assistance in areas of access to capital, business planning, marketing, financial management and technology transfer.

The good news to budding entrepreneurs is this: York-SBDC does not charge for its services since the program is administered by the State of New York and sponsored by the State, the US Small Business Administration and the City University of New York at York College.

"We help entrepreneurs, business and the industry solve problems. The timing now may be off but there are still opportunities around," added Yeung, who has over 10 years of diversified experience and expertise in small business development. ■

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700,000 Fil-Ams may get housing rescue

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house, or mortgage. In his speech at Dobson High School in Mesa, Arizona, the US President said the plan aims to require participating lenders to reduce mortgage payments "to no more than 31 percent of a borrower's income."

The US Census Bureau said the ACS provides the latest detailed look at the nation's rapidly changing and diverse population with the release of new population profiles by race, ancestry, and age. These profiles were produced using the 2000 decennial census. The Census Bureau said it uses the term foreign-born to refer to anyone who is not a US citizen at birth.

"This includes naturalized US citizens, lawful permanent residents (immigrants), temporary migrants (such as students), humanitarian migrants (such as refugees), and persons illegally present in the US," the Census Bureau explained.

(It added however that questions "about legal (migrant) status of respondents in any of its survey and census programs" are not asked).

For Philippine-born US residents, the median selected monthly owner costs with a mortgage was pegged at \$2,344. This is higher by nearly a thousand to the median \$1,464 for the estimated total 301 mil-

lion people in the US.

The median selected monthly owner costs without a mortgage for Philippine-born US residents included in the ACS was also higher at \$475 compared with the US-wide median of \$407.

Based on the ACS, some 405,017 Philippines-born residents in the US own their own houses of the total 587,052 housing units recorded for this population segment.

While the ACS didn't reveal if Filipinos shelling out more than 30 percent of their income to mortgage are facing foreclosure, its data reveal nearly three-quarters of a million of Filipinos are paying above their earning.

Still, anecdotal data of Filipinos smack in the center of the housing crisis in the US have been reported by news agencies.

On the other hand, many Filipinos (53.5 percent or 925,412) were recorded by ACS to have been spending less than 30 percent of their income for cost of owning a house in the past 12 months.

ACS data cited that the median household income in the 12 months up to January this year of Philippine-born US residents at \$78,050, higher than the US-wide \$50,740 household income. ■

Overseas Filipinos told: Get out and register

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for it in all Philippine foreign service posts intensify toward the end of the OAV registration period until August 31 this year.

Citing the OAVS report, he said Hong Kong posted the biggest number of OAV registrants at 5,715. The nine other foreign service posts in the top 10 are: Los Angeles with 3,981; London, 2,569; Toronto, 2,322; Dubai, 1,947; New York, 1,859; Washington D.C., 1,541; Brunei, 1,379; and Tokyo, 1,224.

"To date, the OAVS has issued a series of instructions to all foreign service posts to strengthen their strategies in order to garner one million OAV registrants for the 2010 national elections," he added.

Among the instructions were for personnel at the

posts to register and for them to promote OAV registration through activities by Filipino communities in their areas of responsibility.

"The posts and attaches from other government or semi-government agencies, under the leadership of the chiefs of mission/ambassadors/heads of posts, shall collaborate and cooperate with one another to achieve the one million overseas absentee voters for the 2010 national elections," according to the OAVS instruction to posts.

Seguis said the posts were encouraged to tie-up with Globe, Smart, and other telecommunications companies in the effort to inform all Filipinos overseas of the on-going registration. (*Inquirer.net*)